

EXHIBIT 16

GRUNTS

The American
Combat Soldier
in Vietnam

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service, as Clive's six-year-old sister, Kathy, walked hand in hand with one of her older brothers to the front of the church to stand alongside their grieving parents.¹⁶

After a heartrending Mass, a caravan traveled to the cemetery situated in the shadows of the fuming smokestacks where only eighteen months earlier Garcia had stood and helped bury Moncayo. After the honor guard fired the twenty-one gun salute, one that jolted family members, Julia rose from her metal chair under the cold drizzle and leaned over the coffin as they prepared to lower it and said: "Thank you for being my son, my son. Oh, my dear boy, thank you so much." Soon, the last of the dead of the original nine took his final resting place in the red clay of their home.¹⁷

Afterward, the story of the Morenci Nine quickly faded from the consciousness of most of the country. Some efforts unfolded to write a book and one Hollywood producer approached the families to develop a movie, but the family and friends and, to a large degree, the community resisted. They preferred to handle their pain and anguish individually.¹⁸

Cisneros, Sorrelman, and Cranford especially dealt with the problems of "survivors' guilt," questioning why they had returned and their friends had not. Cisneros appeared to handle it the best, maintaining the memory of his friends while moving on with his life although he battled various demons.¹⁹ Sorrelman experienced flashbacks and admitted to drinking too much and fighting often in an effort to displace his anger.²⁰

Cranford in particular struggled as he remained in the area, while the others left after the disastrous 1983 Strike. Wracked by guilt as he worked with West's father and burdened by undiagnosed post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), he fought the demons with alcohol and self-destructive behavior. At one point, he had crosses with the names and dates of death of each of his six friends tattooed on his left arm, running from his wrist to his shoulder. Ultimately, in 2004, he finally received treatment and a monetary settlement for what doctors in the VA hospital in Tucson characterized as a severe case of PTSD.²¹ He recently died at the age of fifty-eight.

Time ultimately helped heal some of the wounds and allowed for some efforts to remember the group, although they continued to remain local. Cisneros has emphasized the importance of remembering his fallen comrades: "I don't want them to be forgotten because they sacrificed their lives. Those guys have been dead for 30 years but not in my mind. I want my kids to at least know that Bobby Draper, their dad's best friend, died in Vietnam for a good reason."²² On July 4, 1997, a committee erected

a memorial to the nine at Morenci High School. Located just outside the main entrance and beside the flagpole, it recognizes the individuals of the Morenci Nine. Daily, it serves as a reminder to the young people of their sacrifices and is part of local political culture that continues to serve as a major conduit for the armed services.

Later, Vietnam veterans built a memorial on the bluffs overlooking Clifton, Morenci's sister city only a few miles down the mountain. Again, the Morenci Nine figure prominently as their dog tags hang along a wire with those of other Greenlee County veterans from all the country's wars, running underneath the flags of all the branches of the military that stand behind a large American flag. Underneath is a box containing a Bible and a plaque on the front quoting John 15:13: "Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends." On the windswept bluff above the red canyons cut by the San Francisco River, the lives and the deaths of many, including the Morenci Nine, remain immortalized for future generations.

Throughout the country, in small farming and mining communities, in urban ethnic enclaves and suburbs, sometimes even in affluent neighborhoods, millions of young men followed the path of the Morenci Nine. They often joined for the same reasons, partly driven by the specter of the draft, sometimes by the opportunity for adventure, and often because they wanted to prove themselves to their elder male role models. Imbued with a sense of mission of defending their country against the Communist hordes, they boarded buses and planes destined for training camps throughout the country and ultimately Vietnam.

Once in Vietnam, the young men often encountered the same hardships as soldiers who preceded them in most American wars, although as the war lingered, those arriving found themselves fighting an increasingly unpopular war. They battled boredom, sometimes punctuated by intense fighting in an extremely hostile environment complete with cobras, leeches, and pesky mosquitoes. American soldiers faced a tough enemy and fought alongside, in the eyes of many grunts, an unreliable ally among an ambivalent and apparently ungrateful South Vietnamese populace.

Like three of the Morenci Nine who survived the ordeal, the typically very young American soldier returned to a country that demonstrated little appreciation for their sacrifices, especially as the war continued. They battled negative stereotypes and some struggled to overcome physical and psychological damage, although many adjusted comparatively quickly, like many of their fathers who fought in World War II. Their families,

wives, parents, and children, along with friends and some comrades persevered in helping their loved ones overcome the trauma of Vietnam, although some never surmounted their experiences.

This book focuses primarily on the young men who became the combat soldiers in Vietnam, mainly Army and Marine infantrymen; as one veteran emphasized, "Nothing was more wretched than being a grunt—nothing."²³ While concentrating primarily on average soldiers, the work also presents the views of their junior officers, especially the first and second lieutenants who led them into the field. In addition, this book includes stories of others, outside of the traditional grunt label, who experienced significant combat and danger, such as the helicopter crews, Special Forces, corpsmen, and those who fought on the swift boats on the rivers of South Vietnam.

While stressing the similarities of the experience of the combat soldier in Vietnam, this work acknowledges as well the differences from time and location. A Medal of Honor recipient, Bob Kerrey, emphasized that in 1969 when he arrived:

An army soldier with the Ninth Division saw a different war than one with the First Air Cavalry. A marine with the First Division would not have recognized the war fought by navy SEALs. Pilots faced a different set of risks, as did navy Seabees or army engineers or for that matter any of the so-called support personnel who often found themselves at greater risk than a combat grunt.²⁴

Nonetheless, there were significant similarities. While each American had a different perspective, depending on where he served, when he served, and the type of duties that he performed, the plethora of sources stress far more commonalities than variations. This book seeks to re-create significant elements of the long struggle that American infantrymen experienced during their tour of duty in South Vietnam, including the homesickness, the boredom, the terror of combat, the heroism, the brutality, the guilt of surviving, the return home, and the adjustments. It also underscores the impact of the service on the family members—wives, sons and daughters, mothers and fathers, and siblings—as well as friends.

There are many challenges in the use of materials employed in this study. Oral histories and memoirs, even letters written at the time, reflect a distance of time from an event that can lead to errors. The

rapidness of the events and the effects of personal perspective must be considered. Bias always enters into the process, especially after the fact, when people rarely seek to portray themselves in a negative light. Despite these challenges, the materials provide insights into the experience, usually corroborated time and time again by other veterans relating to joining, recruit training, combat, or the return home. Ultimately, significant continuities have developed from the readings of the materials in the various sources, as well as from the many others consulted that never directly reached the text.

The organizing principles of the book include important factors, such as masculinity, race, and class. Building on the works of authors such as Christian Appy and James Ebert, it incorporates more of a national approach than some predecessors.²⁵ The study ranges from the experiences of those from big cities such as New York and Seattle, to suburbs such as Massapequa, New York, and to smaller towns such as Morenci, Arizona, and Cookeville, Tennessee, and many other locales and regions. It also includes the experiences of African Americans, Native Americans, Asian Americans, and Latinos. While noting differences, it stresses similarities in experiences built around social constructions of masculinity and race, both at the local and national levels. These constructions help create more continuity among the stories and unify experiences.

For many younger readers Vietnam has begun to fade in historical consciousness, as a generation born after 1960 has virtually no real memories of America's longest war; instead movies and distortions through the lens of political partisanship have shaped perspectives. This book challenges the stereotypes of popular culture by using the letters, diaries, and oral histories of the Vietnam combat soldiers to highlight their significant sacrifices in Southeast Asia and to address some of the myths circling around the people who bore the brunt of the fighting and dying on the front lines in the jungles, rice paddies, and mountains of South Vietnam.

Nonetheless, some warnings are necessary. As an observer noted in relation to telling the story of the Vietnam combat soldiers: "You have to watch out for exaggerating what you did. But no matter how you try to talk about it, it still sounds bigger, worse, more deadly, and more romantic than it actually was."²⁶ Also, the problem of the limitations of empathy continues. One veteran emphasized that he only talked with his buddies about Vietnam. On a couple of occasions, he tried to talk to his wife about it, "but like most people, she can't visualize Vietnam

in its entirety and impact. I guess you just had to be there and see it to understand it.”²⁷

Ultimately, a major goal of this book is to spark more research about many of the topics, as a substantial number remain underdeveloped in the existing literature. Time is a precious commodity in the process as the Vietnam veteran generation ages quickly. Too many have already died, some victims of the war years beyond when they last stepped on Vietnamese soil. Their memories, from the humblest private to the most senior leader, deserve preservation and incorporation into the social fabric of America. If this book provokes others to examine these topics further, then I will consider it a success.

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